1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

443 press to more permanent quarters. Arabs set up more permanent stalls at the market. Girls "between marriages" set up their "hotel services" in makeshift shacks, featuring an imported double bed, and foods like the housewife makes at home, including daily fresh beer. A bizarre variety of trade goods pours in, of foreign or domestic origin. Finally, the government sets up an elementary school-- the most recent development, usually post-1942.

B. Shelter: The Amhara Hut.

342 The Amhara circular hut of wattle and daub, with its overhanging roof to carry off the rains, is called "tuqul" (now more often "sar byet", i.e. thatched house; in some districts, "gojo"). It does not differ basically from the typical habitation of the Cushitic-speaking Galla, of central Ethiopia. But further south several distinctly different types are encountered, following ethno-linguistic and tribal lines.

The "tuqul" may contain one room or two, through an interior separation or special elevation. It usually houses both the biological family of procreation and their more important livestock which are brought in at night for fear of hyenas. Tuquls in more elaborate hamlets include special storage tuquls, a kitchen tuqul, and even a guest tuqul which may double as extra storage space for the largest beer jars. During the rainy season, when temperatures, especially at night, drop considerably, the family huddles closely around the central fireplace inside the tuqul, and in that 3-month season the tuqul can be considered overcrow-

342 ded and especially unsanitary. But during most of the year nearly all activities during the 12 to 13 hours of daylight are carried on outside. After each rainy season the roof and walls are inspected for damage from heavy rain, hail and tornadoes, and, with repairs, a good tuqul can last twenty years.

The hut-building season begins usually a few months after the rainy season is over, in the month of Hedar, after the major harvest of cereals has been gathered and threshed. A tuqul is usually built in stages, interrupted by other chores. Since there is no danger of rain, the beams, saplings, withes, thatch grass can be selected from forest and bush at leisure, and left on the spot selected. But when a marriage approaches, especially during the main "mar-
[476] riage season", the entire process can be speeded up to little over a week; and if there are not enough hands in one hamlet, other kinsmen and friends can be invited to the hut-building-party, the host supplying daily spiced meat stew, barley beer, etc., thus attracting as many as twenty men.

[36] The first step is to select a location that will blend into the landscape and thus be best protected from wind, driving rain, tornado twisters. Cypresses, which always surround a church on the hilltop, are utilized as partial windbreaks for tuquls of a hamlet just below.

The circular ground floor for the hut, usually about 20 feet in, is measured off by means of a central stick and a rope. The stick indicates where the central, roof-supporting post will be, and the circle indicates the walls. Both the selection of location and the measuring of the ground is done by a semi-specialist, an Amhara who acts

342as "consultant" and is therefore treated with honor, which would not be the case if he were a fully specialized craftsman. He may be the local saddlemaker who furnishes the wooden framework but will not touch any leatherwork; very likely he is the local weather-expert; he may be the one who understands the qualities of certain woods at a glance. He is rewarded with gifts of beer, chickens, etc.

Once he has marked out the ground plan, the team uses hoes to dig a circular ditch on the circle, about a foot deep, as foundation for the walls. Strong saplings of hard woods are set upright in the trench to form the backbone of the wall, measuring, above ground, to a height of at least 74 inches. The top of the roof will measure another 70" from the top of the wall (measured from the center pole). A gap is left for the doorway. The saplings forming the wall are set so close that they touch each other, but, since there is no "carpentry", no fine trimming or straightening, the saplings remain in the shape in which they grew.

When all the poles of the wall are in place, thinner but strong and elastic withes resembling willow branches are intertwined through the wall saplings, until they form hoops running horizontally through the entire wall. They are tied in place, usually leaving a thumbwidth of space between each hoop. Now mud mixed with straw is plastered thickly to the walls, both inside and out, and pressed into the framework, in a process called "yacheqa margacha". In case of an especially well-built hut three plaster coats of clay are later added to the outside ("märrägä, lässänä, lägällägä"), and each is permitted to dry almost to the hard-

342 ness of cement. At this point there is usually a pause and a feast.

The next job is the preparation of a framework for the roof. First the central pole is set in place, preferable a straight, heavy pole with a natural fork at the top. In this fork is placed the strong horizontal beam, "walta" (or "gedgeda") which forms a transversal across the entire diameter of the hut, its ends resting directly on the wall which is reinforced on these two spots by special poles. This horizontal beam later becomes the dividing line for interior partitions, and the base for horizontal storage facilities for gesho (hops), maize, and pre-baked ingredients of barley beer which must be on hand every day.

The men go to the forest or bush to select and cut slender but strong rafters, elastic but strong hoops for the roof, etc. Since churches have the best roofs, a däbtära (scribe-chorister attached to the church) is often invited to supervise the roof-building and thatching. A church roof or that of a well-to-do farmer is thatched with a strong, brownish reed-grass called "kedän" (lit. covenant); another good sort is "sänbälet".

A kind of cupola ("gulelat") is made of wooden rafters (magär) long enough to sit on the walls and even project, while converging to a point on top. During the preparation, the cupola is placed upside down on the ground, and the rafters are tentatively tied in place. The cupola is now set on the "walta" beam, and centered on top of the center pole of the hut. Many more rafters are tied onto the cupola. Paired hoops of vine-like branches of strength and elasti-

342 city ("chemchem") are woven into and across the rafters or tied to them, all the way up to the top of the roof; Sometimes, instead of in parallel rings, the hoops are wound to the top in spiral, seashell-type windings (bat). Near that lower border, where the rafters are farther apart, additional shorter sticks ("mäqa" bamboo) are shoved in between, so that no large gaps are left in the roof frame. Everything is tied in place, and a strong roof results.

Thatching is done by the master of the new tuqul, with the aid of men who are considered good at this. They work up from the edge of the roof to the top, then a second layer is laid and tied to the first, then a third to the second. At the top the thatch is tied to the top of the center pole, or to a stick firmly planted into the top of the hut's center pole. This is reinforced from the inside. The outside peak of the thatched roof forms a tuft called "qunçho" (lit. crest of hair), or "sebsab". Near trade routes, imported heavy glass bulbs or oriental perfume bottles are often fitted upside down on this tuft, for functional reasons they hold better against rain and as ornament. Falasha potterymakers create a small tower-like outer dome ("gullelat") over the tuft. A well-made roof may last 10 to 30 years, with repairs.

[354] There is no opening for a chimney. The smoke from the daily cooking fire escapes through the door, and in time through cracks in the walls, blackening the inner rafters with soot. Three stones are placed near the center of the hut, to serve as the fireplace.

A door is now made of wooden planks for a good hut or a church, or of bamboo sticks "mäqa" for an ordinary

342 hut. The door is equipped with projecting pivots on top and bottom, the ends turning in two troughs carved into the door-frame.

The overhanging roof protects most of the wall from being damaged by driving rain, and the darkness inside is also a protection against the sun-loving flies. The average hut needs re-thatching every 5 to 8 years, and an additional coating of clay plaster mixed with straw every 2 to 3 years. Old huts, abandoned due to fire, war, death [777] by sickness, etc., are considered unlucky and are not rebuilt. Sometimes their remaining walls are used as windbreaks for garden crops.

Interior architecture consists of the following:
(1) a high-fencelike partition of bamboo ("mäqa") to give privacy to the master and his wife, usually center-right from the door, with a special high elevation on which the bed of the couple is set; another high partition, usually to the left of the door or toward the rear, for nighttime shelter for calves, goats or the family mule. This fencelike, permanent partition is called "get" or "gedgedda";
352 (2) a solid clay bench which runs along half the interior of the walls, on one or both sides of the door, about 16 inches high, called "mädäb" usually covered with sheepskins. On this clay bench men sit during the day with visitor, while sipping barley beer, and at night the children sleep on them, covering themselves with the sheepskins;
(3) on top of a center-rear elevation of rock and clay, up to 42" high, rests the "alga", the master's bed, 15"-30" high. It consists of a wooden frame on four wooden

[352] accumulate there when poured over the limp sheets of bread.

251 (7) Food staples must be stored out of reach of domestic animals, on horizontal slats fastened between the horizontal beam and walls. On these slats lie flat cakes of "abshelo" (pre-fermented and baked hops), bunches of sorghum, husks of maize, etc.

352 To provide additional privacy, togas can be hung across. This was done in the past particularly at dinner [754] time, to protect the eaters from the "evil eye" in the [609] presence of non-kinsmen, and is still done in some remote areas, unless the peasant prefers to postpone his meal until the stranger has gone away, so as not to offend him.

● 342 The tuqul is regarded as a good, sound habitation by the Amhara. It is compared to the round tent of the king and duke ("ras") which not so long ago was the center of activities (if not the actual capital) of the province and [554] country. On the other hand, reactangular or square huts, "säqäla", are regarded as carrying low prestige, little more than temporary lean-to's of hunters. The proverb indicates [539] this low regard of a säqäla:

"Of children, the worst is the bastard;
of foods, the hardest is beans;
of clothing, the poorest is nätäla (half-toga);
of housing, the poorest is säqäla."

Response: "(but) from enemy, the bastard son will defend you;
toward better days the bean will let you survive;
in (warm) daytime, the nätäla will clothe you;
till a better is built, the säqäla will shelter you".

There are special tuquls of varying degrees of sturdiness:

●342 sega byet - where meat is stored after sundrying in strips;

wät byet - the kitchen hut;

gemja byet - the "treasury" house, general storehouse of tools and weapons, drums, decorations.

tej byet - honeymead brewery; talla byet - beer brewery, worked by women.

engeda byet- guest hut;

adarash - reception hut, larger, less solid, used for banqueting;

mänyeta byet - (lit. bedroom house), the master's bedroom hut;

"mad byet" - dining hut for daily dining.

565 352 The noble also has carpets ("sägaja") to sit on or, in feudal tents, to use as tapestry. These are carried from long distances, where specialists live, or are imported. He also has hardwood stools ("dekkwa") to sit on, cut out of solid tree trunks. In a wooden storage box he has one or several burnos, and one or several "kaba" (a dark, woolen mantle). Guests receive their coffee in small imported glazed china cups instead of clay ones, and the reed table is a "massob work", with dyed braids of imported dyes, in geometric designs.

824 461 C. What Nature Provides: Lumbering, Hunting, Fishing, Collecting

Much of what little ingenuity goes into Amhara material culture is applied to the direct exploitation of natural resources. He would rather spend days and weeks

patients to her when his organic medicines had not helped. It was this guide who hit on the idea of flattering Lady Salämtew by notifying her that the foreigner was sick, suffering from severe headaches, sleeplessness and chronic intestinal cramps - (all common ailments in her practice), and that he would trust only her for treatment. Whether or not Lady Salamtew believed this, it indicated to her that the foreigner would fit himself into the framework and procedures of her zar cult, and not become a disturbing element that might "offend" her zar spirits.

The guide had taken the further precaution of negotiating with her through her brothers, who were willing to encourage her to accept, in the hope of gifts and rewards. As a result, Lady Salamtew accepted in principle; but in line with the unhurried dignity of her position she had the foreigner informed that he should send the guide again at a later time when she would make known the conditions under which he might attend the "amat bal" convention. In appreciation for having reached this point in the negotiation, the guide left her brothers with some "etan gänzäb" (money for frankincense).

The next step was reached when Lady Salamtu expressed the wish to have the foreigner appear before her, some days before the convention, so that she could look him over.

Her house, a semimodern affair of hard-mud walls, is reached by a steep downhill trail from the Gondar town market. On the lower level (the old section of Gondar called "Addis Alam") many houses and huts are built on the foundations of stone houses destroyed by the dervishes in the late 19th century. This section, once restricted to Muslim and ~~xxx~~ other non-Coptic minorities, is now largely inhabited by Muslim Ethiopian weavers and retail traders, many ex-slaves of Sudanese or part-Shanqalla

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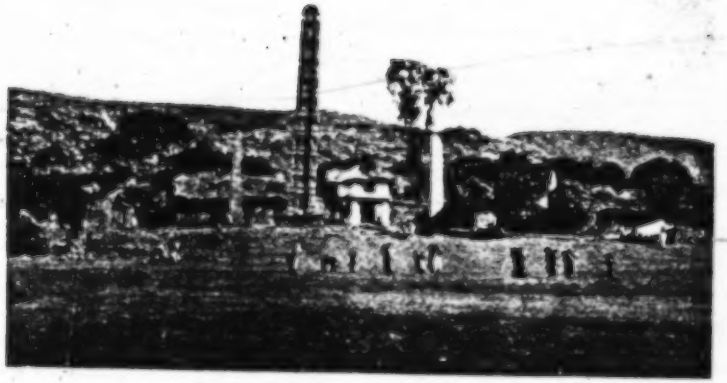

Phot. R. E. Cheesman

Aksum, monoliths

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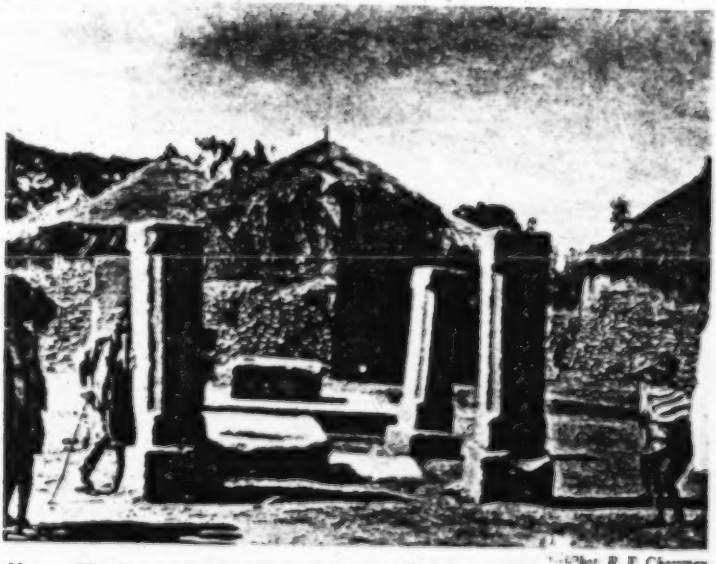

Phot. R. E. Cheesman

Aksum, King's coronation throne and four pillars, Abunas' throne in background

[Facing p. 13]

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

These figures show that the gorges, together with the adjoining and intervening plateau, carry a considerably higher population than the rest of the plateau, the combined average being over 200 per square mile. The figures for population per church are also interesting. The gorges and the adjacent parts of the plateau contain no fewer than thirteen churches and they serve an average population of only some 650 souls each. On the other hand the churches of the general plateau, not counting those of Debra Berhan, which chiefly serve the townspeople, number only four. They must cater for about three times as many people each, and until recently many more for two of them are recent foundations.

The higher population of the gorge region is attributable to two causes: the greater productivity of the land there, and the historical fact, already referred to, that the Amharas were long forced to live in the gorges, and have re-emerged only in recent times. This is confirmed by the evidence of the churches which, in such numbers, are sure evidence of a long-established Christian population.[1] The oldest ones are among those in the depths of the gorges; sites on the edges of gorges seem to be more recent. The few plateau churches are all relatively modern and bespeak the re-occupation by Amharas; two of them were indeed founded within the last fifteen years, and one as recently as 1945.

As can be seen from the map, sites chosen for dwellings are usually on the higher ground. The favourite sites, of which many examples can be seen on the sheet, are rocky ridges and the tops or upper slopes of hills and minor plateaus. A high place with an outlook, together with reasonable proximity to permanent water, seem to be the conditions sought after. Even the most elevated and exposed hill-tops are generally inhabited, whereas nobody tries to live on the plains near the main streams, which become very swampy in the rains. The ordinary family, together with its domestic animals, lives in a small, irregular cluster of round huts, which in this area are built of stone cemented with mud and carry a conical thatched roof. They are surrounded, as a rule, by a dry-stone wall, which may be shared by several households. Richer people may have an ornamental gatehouse at the main entry, with a little watchman's room over the gate; but such ostentation was not common.

Disregarding some of the Debra Berhan people, almost the entire population is engaged in farming which, here as elsewhere in Ethiopia, is the mainstay of existence. Some possess their own land; others hold their plots, in return for a proportion of the produce (but without any security of tenure), from absentee landowners. There is also a landless element, greatly increased through the disturbing influence of the Italian occupation, who hire themselves out as ploughmen and labourers. I had intended to measure some typical holdings in order to estimate the area actually required to support a family, but my time in the area was cut short and I never did so. As a very rough estimate I think that about 15–20 per cent. of the area is under cultivation in any one year, which would indicate an average per family of something like 4 acres. This does not include fallow land which, once re-grown with grass, cannot be distinguished at a glance from permanent pasture.

The most exposed parts of the plateau near Debra Berhan will grow two crops only, barley and broad beans, but a limited amount of wheat (a bearded

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

each one with his whip[1] in his hand, and they would not let us enter, saying that we should give them some pepper, and they kept us for a good while at the gate. Passing through this gate we arrived at another, at which stood three other porters who seemed more honourable persons; these made us wait more than half an hour standing on a little straw, and the heat was so great it killed us. Upon this the ambassador sent to say that he should bid us come in or he would return to his abode. Then the message went by one who seemed to be of higher position, and word came that we should enter. The Barnagais was in this manner, in a large house of one story (for in this country there are not houses of several stories), sitting on a bedstead, as is their custom, fitted with poor curtains; he had sore eyes, and his wife was sitting at the head of the bedstead. Having made our obeisance, the ambassador offered him a *master* to cure him; and he said that he had no need of him, as though he did not thank him for it. Upon this the ambassador asked him as a favour, and required on the part of Prester John, that he should order equipment to be given us for our journey, assuring him how much service he would be doing in this way to the king of Portugal, which would be well repaid to him by the King and by his Captain-major; and he, the ambassador, would tell Prester John the honour and favour which he received from him. The Barnagais asking what it was that we required, the ambassador said he wanted oxen and asses for baggage, and mules for the Portuguese. To this the Barnagais replied that he could not give any mules, and that we might buy them ourselves; that he would give orders for the rest, and would send a son of his with us to the court of Prester John, and with that he gave us our dismissal.

[1] *Azoragues*, a kurbach, or whip of hide, *cravache*.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Abegue*, an Emperor.

[2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

mouth and causes it to bleed freely; in spite of, or perhaps because of this, I never came across an Abyssinian pony with a hard mouth; indeed, they can nearly all be ridden on a snaffle.

Their mules are so covered with many-hued trappings that sometimes they leave very little of the beast to be seen. These trappings are made of several thicknesses of native-dyed coloured leathers sewn together, machine-embroidered in silks of many colours, and covered with metal ornaments.

On special occasions the Abyssinians of rank cover their mules with extra gorgeous drapings in vivid colourings of velvet or silk, decorated with handsome embossed silver or silver-gilt ornaments. The men themselves on these occasions bring out their best sword and buckler, the latter being made of stretched and shaped rhino hide, covered with velvet and ornamented with silver and gilt mountings.

The houses of the wealthier people are constructed of stone (of which ample supplies are available almost everywhere), plastered together with a sort of mortar called *chika*, mostly mud and water; the roof is either of corrugated iron or is thatched. They are as a rule one-storied buildings, though I have been in one or two that had an upper story surrounded by a verandah and reached by an outside staircase, but these have generally been acquired from Greeks. In these cases the ground floor is frequently used as stabling for the mules and ponies (even amongst Greeks and Armenians), a state of affairs which can hardly be regarded as sanitary.

In the peasants' *tukuls* in the country, men, women, and children, mules, ponies, and other animals sleep

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

all together in their single room; if to the aroma arising from this combined population be added the acrid smoke from a fire made of dung-cakes, and a plentiful accompaniment of fleas and other insects, the joys of a night's shelter in such quarters may well be imagined.

The house nearly always stands in a very large piece of ground surrounded by a mud and stone wall. It is a curious habit of theirs that in building the wall they generally start with the gateway. Occasionally, for one reason or another, the wall-building suffers a hitch, and one sees the quaint spectacle of a gateway (sometimes with a gate), a few yards of wall, and then nothing to impede general ingress. Some of the chiefs, however, are now building themselves better places, especially those that have been on missions to Europe. But even among these an ordinary *tukul* sometimes suffices, and most of the important chiefs I met in Abyssinia were content with most primitive installations.

The *tukuls* of the poorer class are mostly constructed in a circular form of sticks plastered inside and out with mud. The roof, which is made separately and put on last, is cone-shaped, made of sticks or cane bound strongly together with strips of bark and then thatched: the latter is an art in which the Abyssinians particularly excel. The roof extends two or three feet from the walls; thus the torrential rains run off easily and leave the hut perfectly dry.

Inside, a part is usually divided off by a length of sheeting suspended on a string, behind which, on a raised platform, the family sleep on couches or beds made of wood and grass and covered with skins; blankets are uncommon, and the *chammas* in which

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

they are rolled form their only covering apart from the clothes which have been worn during the day. The remaining part of the hut is used for everything—living, cooking, eating, and also spinning in the rainy season—but of course in the dry weather much work is done outside. Apart from one or two rough wooden stools, furniture is rare or non-existent in these huts. In most of them, however, there are one or more wooden packing-cases containing the owners' most precious possessions, and fastened with a padlock and key; the remainder of their worldly goods are hung on hooks or put in niches in the walls. A form of basket-table is used at meal-times as both dish and plate, and drinking-cups made of horn are still to be seen in the provinces, though imported cups are now fairly common in Addis. A draught of mead from a cow's horn a couple of feet long is delightfully reminiscent of the pictures of the Danish and Norse invaders of England in the distant past.

342 352 [416]

[pp. 82–173 have not been processed for the files.–Analyst]

10: Barkhuus D-5 (1944-1945) 1947 MP5 Amhara MP5

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Typical huts for lepers at the Akaki Leprosarium near Addis Ababa.

[p. 7110.]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

[MANZ]

29 / *The Legacy of Manz and Gondar*

The history and customs of Manz are more obviously related to its geography than is the case with Gondar. The encircling wall of mountains has been a source of isolation and protection, two factors of great moment in the history of the area. Peculiar eating and clothing habits have developed in response to a climate which, owing to the altitude of Manz and its position at the edge of an escarpment that leads down to a desert of the Rift Valley, is one of the coldest in Ethiopia. The temperature often approaches the freezing point, and in the colder months (October and November) standing in the sunshine at high noon is no defense against a shrill wind that pierces the bones.

Barley is the only crop that thrives in the highest parts of Manz, though wheat, beans, peas, and chick-peas grow in the slightly lower altitudes. But *tĕff*, the grain preferred by Abyssinians for the preparation of their staple food —a kind of pancake known as *ĭnjarā*—cannot be cultivated at those heights, so the Manzē typically eats *ĭnjarā* made of barley.

Sheep are a major item in the Manz economy. The average farm has a herd of 100 to 150 sheep, which provide a heavy wool as well as the Manzē's favorite meat. This wool is used to make the *bānnā*, a warm blanket which is wrapped around the body and constitutes the standard dress of the Manzē. The *bānnā* distinguishes him from other Abyssinians, who wear a white cotton toga called *shammā*. Wealthier men wear the *barnos*, a tailored cape made of dark wool. Manzē wool is also used for the weaving of rugs which ornament the homes of the well-to-do.

No dyes are used in working their wool, so a crowd of Manzēs in natural-colored *bānnā* seen at a distance resembles a flock of their sheep. This is one of the touches contributing to the impressive aesthetic unity of the Manz landscape. The effect is also produced by the fact that the Manzē's house is built of stone, the same stone that is seen everywhere on the terrain; and its conical roof is made of thatch, which makes the roof look like the piles of grain in the fields. The churches are also built of stone with thatched conical roofs. Everything one sees in Manz bespeaks a harmony with the natural environment.

The cold climate of Manz is invigorating. It prevents food from spoiling quickly and discourages diseases which flourish in lower altitudes. The Manzē boasts that his climate keeps people healthy and gives them long lives, and indeed it is not uncommon to find men sprightly in their eighties and nineties. But only the hardy survive, for life there is as rugged as the land, and the people—like their landscape—are stony, bleak, and full of dark recesses.

Manz does not occupy so conspicuous a place in Ethiopian history as Gondar. Indeed, most books on Ethiopia do not even mention the area. While

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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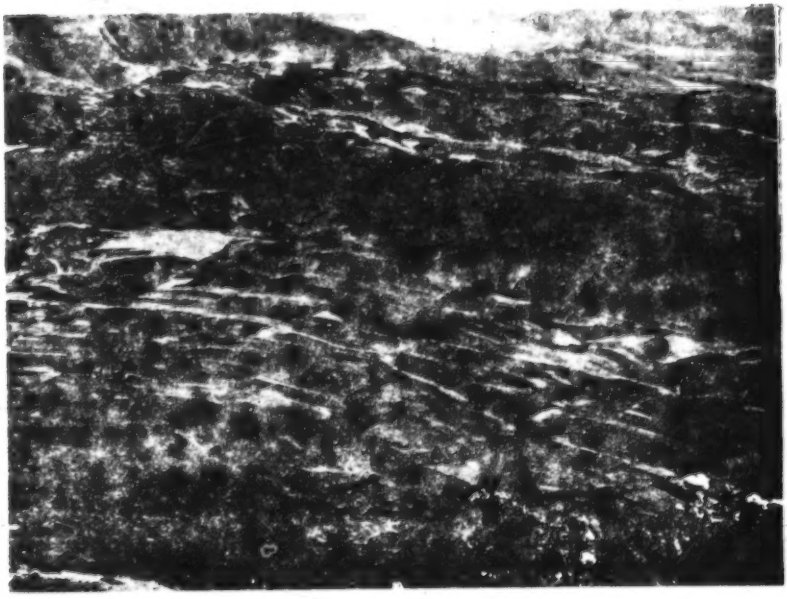

FIG. 6.—*The Amhara countryside*

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FIG. 7.—*An Amhara homestead, Manz*

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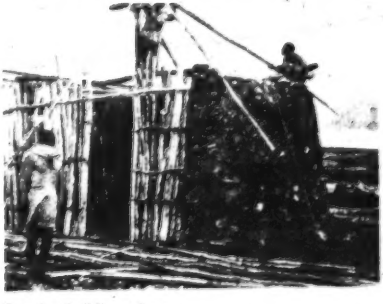

FIG. 8.—*Building a house*

[D-46-A]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[2]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[3]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rĭst*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pia by a Muslim from the East—suggests a repetition of the Grāñ episode. Finally, there is the previously mentioned conception of the end of the world as a time of renewal, when those who died first will return to life and history will begin again.

Space, like time, is not regarded as an amoral and homogeneous continuum to be submitted to systematic measurement. Land is not something to be bought or sold at will, but belongs by right to a family, a church, or a ruling line. Land titles are defined loosely, by convention and approximation, and the Amhara peasantry have objected to attempts by the government to make exact measurements of their land. The reluctance to rationalize space is conspicuous even in the capital of Ethiopia, where to this day there are no street numbers, so that places can only be identified roughly as near a certain police station or past a certain hospital. Directions are indicated with difficulty. The points of the compass are almost never used, though there are words for the four directions. Instead, the vague terms for "up" and "down" serve to answer almost every question about location.

Though the peasants are often unclear about the precise boundaries of various place names in the countryside, they do know just where the several churches are located over a wide area. It is customary for them to locate a given place by reference to the nearest church. Thus they will say: "He lives below Abbo" or "We must travel above Mikā'ēl." As a result, locations in space are identified by the same set of co-ordinates as are events in time, namely, the names of the saints. Moreover, just as certain months each year are occasions for special celebrations in behalf of each sacred figure, so in the countryside certain churches are considered especially holy shrines. Thus, there is special veneration for *Ṭerr Māryām* ("St. Mary's Day in the month of Ṭerr") and Gishēn Māryām ("St. Mary's Church in the district of Gishēn").

The dominant configuration in the Amhara's experience of space is that of concentric circles. Whether or not we try to relate this to the cyclical organization of time, the fact remains that the pattern of a charged center surrounded by circles of decreasing significance recurs in the main areas of Amhara life.

It appears, first, in his architecture. The traditional peasant home is round, with a conical roof supported by a pole that rises in the center of the circle. This is the domestic inner sanctum, a room for eating and talking and getting warm by the fire. It is often separated by a circular partition from sections that serve for storage, cooking, and animals. The compound in which the home stands is surrounded in some regions by a stone or brush fence, a boundary that separates the residential kin group from the whole outside world.

This pattern is more fully developed in the churches, which are round like the huts but larger and contain two concentric circular partitions inside. The

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

871
342

FIG. 20.—*Traditional (church) school: student huts*

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516
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FIG. 21.—*Traditional school: learning to read*

871
516
291

FIG. 22.—*Traditional school: learning zēmā from master*

[P. 142-A]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Synchronization and Privacy

*121 181 571 The degree of independence that exists in Amhara society may be further assessed by focusing on certain abstract properties of its organization as well as on the concrete institutions just discussed. In this context two variables are particularly relevant. One, degree of synchronization, concerns the extent to which the behavior of the individuals in group activities is strictly controlled and co-ordinated. The other concerns the extent to which the individual may be free from the intrusion of others when he desires privacy.

Except in the area of protocol and etiquette at the royal court, synchronization is conspicuously lax among the Amhara. Ample scope is left for individual whim and impulse in nearly every area of concerted activity. Groups of people going on a trip, for example, make little attempt to start at the same time or to keep abreast of each other. Carefully co-ordinated teamwork is [476] scarcely known in manual labor. Military units proceed, not in squads and [704] platoons, but as masses of individuals.

*121 181 571 533 535 The lack of synchronization in singing and dancing is perhaps the most striking case of all, for in these activities the participating individuals are supposed to be performing in unison. Yet the choirs of *dabtarā* sing with little regard for the standard line; each chorister sings as the spirit moves him, and the resulting cacophony is punctuated from time to time as some voice stands out by intoning a phrase with new energy a few beats before or after the majority of his fellows. A similar phenomenon occurs in dance, where what apparently is intended to be a symmetry of motion appears rather as a cohort of individual movements.* The impression left by such performances is that the Amhara accord a high degree of independence to the individual whenever he does take part in collective enterprises.

*121 181 571 [591] [576] The Amhara likewise maintain a high degree of respect for individual privacy, despite the hierarchical character of their society. This is shown, first, in the expectation that each nuclear family should inhabit its separate dwelling. The individual home is regarded with great respect; no one, not even a relative, presumes to enter another's home without being properly acknowledged and escorted inside. When possible, private quarters are isolated from those where guests are entertained. The ideal Amhara household, [592] found among the well-to-do, contains separate buildings for private quarters [342] (*ĭlfĭñ*) and for the hall where company is received and entertained (*addārāsh*).

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* At times, it may be noted, when more complex ceremonies permit a plurality of musical and choreographic themes to be going on simultaneously, despite the lack of synchronization the over-all aesthetic effect is often quite impressive. Such is the case, for example, in the ceremonial procession on Ṭĭmqat day described in chap. iii.

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621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talla sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivators of timene and church lands (riym). During the [178] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [241] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibañas, eight as wood cutters,

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

criteria. His personal interest means to the student rapid advancement through the curriculum, dining at the master's table, and enjoying privileged information of a non-ecclesiastical nature. Without his patronship, a student is committed to years of uncertainty and physical misery, scraping to meet his subsistence needs, paying his "tuition" in demeaning services, such as gathering the master's wood and tilling his garden, and in deferential performances, particularly washing the master's feet and those of his visitors.

The kiyne student is further troubled by the many ailments which are his lot. He lives, with one or two of his mates, in a wretched lean-to of twigs and wild grasses, which proves to be poor protection against the cold winter rains. Often he owns only the toga on his back, and it, like him, remains unwashed for the duration of the long dry season. Thus, ikek (scrofula) becomes his badge, and kurtimat (joint pains) and weba (fever) his recurrent companions. The student's diet is his special concern, since it conspicuously lacks the combination of wholesome wot (stew) and injera (pancake-like bread) necessary to sustain good health. He obtains most of his food by begging in the town and local hamlets, where he generally receives scraps of stale injera bread, always inadequate and potentially pathogenic (i.e., likift bearing, threatening fever and